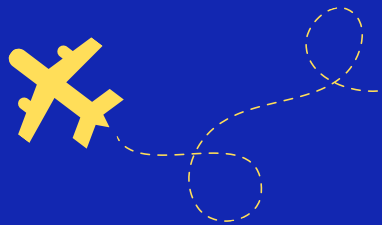


Center for International Education
University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire

HOST
FRIEND
PROGRAM
HANDBOOK



Contact Information

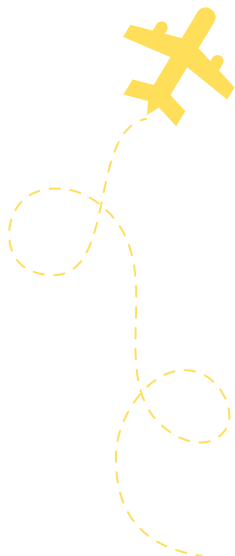
Email: hostfriend@uwec.edu

Phone: (715) 836-4411

Website: www.uwec.edu/cie

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Introduction

UW-Eau Claire is fortunate to have a large group of international students arriving to our campus each semester.

Our Host Friend Program connects these new international students with local community members to promote a positive transition to our community.




Goals of the Program

Provide international students a family-friendly environment to help them adjust to daily American life.

Introduce international students to the new customs, culture, and community they will be living in.

Invite students to share their family, customs, and cultures with us, so they will still feel connected from wherever they came.



Our students and host friends come from a variety of religious, cultural, and political backgrounds. Sharing viewpoints, opinions, and experiences regarding these subject areas will likely be one of the most interesting and rewarding aspects of this program. Host Friends and students should never attempt to change another person's religious beliefs or political affiliations.

Expectations

As a Host Friend



- **Provide support to an international student during their first semester at UW-Eau Claire**
- **Connect with your student at least once a month**
- **Introduce your student/s to Eau Claire, Wisconsin, and the U.S. cultures**
- **Learn about the culture and customs of your student**
- **Contact the Host Friend Program team with any concerns or if you do not get a response after a few weeks from your student**
- **Let the Host Friend Program team know if you can no longer be involved in the program**

Hosts are NOT responsible for:

- **Financial support,**
- **Immigration advising**
- **Academic advising**
- **Healthcare (physical or emotional)**
- **Providing housing, during the semester or school breaks**

If an issue arises that you are uncomfortable with, please reach out to the Host Friend Program team.

Trained professionals on campus can help students with many situations. We can connect students with resources on campus.

Expectations

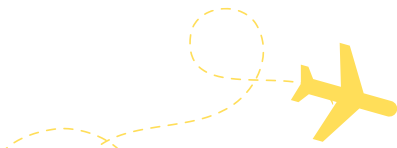
For Students



- **Connect with their Host Friend once a month**
- **Respond to their Host Friend's invitations/emails/phone messages**
- **Notify hosts in advance if they must cancel an engagement**
- **Be kind and respectful towards hosts and their hospitality**
- **Contact the Host Friend Program team if they can no longer continue the host relationship**

Connecting with a Student

- **The Host Friend Program team will reach out each semester to Host Friends to connect with a student**
- **Host Friends can respond with interest and how many students they would like to connect with**
- **The Host Friend team sends connections to students and Host Friends (we cannot guarantee a connection can be made each semester)**
- **Students are asked to arrive directly to campus on the Monday of New International Student Orientation Week (typically, the last week in August and January)**
- **A Host Friend Welcome Reception will be held during the orientation week to welcome Host Friends and students to the program.**






Hospitality Hints

- **Connect with your student through email or social media before they arrive to create a welcoming environment**
- **Learn to pronounce your students given name and practice saying it with them**
- **Speak distinctly but not loudly; It is more helpful to pause between sentences than to speak each word slowly**
 - **Try to avoid using slang or idioms**
 - **Ask your student to repeat anything you do not understand and encourage them to do the same.**
- **Treat students as part of the family; Share photographs, find mutual hobbies, explain new customs and manners to them**



More Hospitality Hints

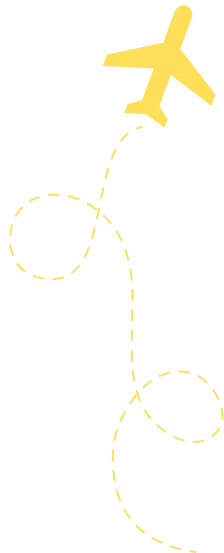
- **Ask students about their family and homes; Have them share their photographs and customs with you.**
- **Becomes familiar with some basic facts about your students home country prior to their arrival. Their traditional holidays can be lonesome for students, helping them celebrate their holidays can mean a lot!**
- **Give your student a tour of your home and explain how the house works (toilets, showers, faucets, lights, etc.)**
- **Briefly explain house or family rules; a written sheet of expectations may be helpful with comprehension**

- 
- **Your student may have dietary restrictions because of religious or cultural practices. Ask your student if they would even like to help shop for and prepare meals!**
 - **Be aware of direct/indirect communication. There are different styles of communication including: personal space, eye contact, use of silence, body language, etc. Don't be offended if your student does not look you in the eye.**
 - **Make sure when you plan an activity with your student that time, place, dress, transportation, and duration of the activity are clearly understood.**
 - **Keep in mind that some cultures do not stress punctuality. Let your student know that when you set a time for an outing, being late may cause a problem.**

Program Activity Ideas

The possibilities are endless! Here are a few ideas to get you started:

- **Downtown Eau Claire Farmers Market**
- **Sledding, skiing, snowshoeing, winter activities!**
- **See a movie**
- **Go to an orchard**
- **Cook an American meal together or go to an American style restaurant**
- **Cook a tradition meal from your students home country together**
- **Play American board/card games**
- **Celebrate their holidays & invite them to yours**
- **Welcome students into your home and daily routines - showcase American life (doesn't have to be elaborate all the time)**



Culture Shock

Culture shock refers to feelings of uncertainty, confusion, or anxiety that people may experience when moving to a new country or environment

Studying abroad can be an exhilarating learning experience for a student, but it also can be a series of bewildering situations. Culture shock is a normal feeling and logical response to the differences a student will encounter in a foreign culture.

Although culture shock is not linear and different for everyone, there are typically 5 phases:

**Fascination
with new
experiences
and culture**

**Feelings of
frustration
towards the
host culture**

**Rejecting
new culture
and people**

**Adjustment
towards
foreign
behavior
and customs**

**Accepting
and
enjoying
new culture**

Why Does it Happen?

Culture Shock occurs when the feelings of excitement or contentment of living in a new environment change due to continued unfamiliarity in customs and actions. The unfamiliarity may lead to frustration, confusion, and a loss of identity in the new environment. The excitement is gone; the struggles of every day life feel more burdensome.

When it Does Happen?

When students first arrive they may be excited and nervous about their upcoming adventure. You can help with their anxiety by listening, answering questions, and pointing them to resources. After their first few weeks, things may become more frustrating as classes increase in difficulty and mid-terms occur. Some students don't experience culture shock for a few months. Reach out to your student. Most students adapt to their new environment, but will still take time to fully adjust.

The Signs and Symptoms

- **Anxiety or stress**
- **Insomnia or oversleeping**
- **Irritability, moodiness, or exaggerated elation**
- **Strong homesickness**

Some students show symptoms of culture shock while others may appear to adapt well. Just because someone does show any signs does not mean they are not struggling. Culture Shock affects everyone differently.

Ways You Can Help

By providing a feeling of home for a student - cooking a meal from their home country together, attending community activities - can bring stability to a student who is feeling unstable in their environment. You can also recommend campus resources or let us know if you see any struggles.

Student Support



Offices

Center for International Education (CIE)

Schofield Hall 3, 715-836-4411, hostfriend@uwec.edu

Housing & Residence Life

Crest Center 222, 715-836-3674, housing@uwec.edu

Advising, Retention & Career Center

Vicki Lord Larson Hall 2100, 715-836-3487, arcc@uwec.edu

Student Health Services

Crest Wellness Center 150, 715-836-5360, shs@uwec.edu

Counseling Services

Vicki Lord Larson Hall 2122, 715-836-5521

Admissions Office

Flesch Family Welcome Center 102, admissions@uwec.edu

Health Insurance and Emergencies

- **All students are required to purchase health insurance throughout their studies in the United States.**
- **Mayo Clinic, Marshfield Clinic, and Sacred Heart Health Systems are all in-network with students' health insurance.**
- **Students are covered even if they do not have their insurance card with them. The CIE will help students with insurance claims.**
- **In case of an emergency, please call 911 and contact the Host Friend Program Team.**

UWEC Map

